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SIPDIS
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DEPARTMENT FOR AF/E JTREADWELL, INR FEHRENREICH

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SUBJECT: REFUGEE UPDATE: TANZANIA BEGINS NATURALIZING 1972 BURUNDI
POPULATION

REF: A: DAR ES SALAAM 299, B: DAR ES SALAAM 413

¶1. (U) Minister of Home Affairs Laurence Masha signed an order August 4 granting Tanzanian citizenship to 3,568 Burundian refugees. These are the first of some 160,000 refugees from the 1972 population who have applied for naturalization (ref a). UNHCR expects thousands more naturalizations in the coming weeks and hopes that that the process will be completed by the end of 2009.

¶2. (U) UNHCR Country Representative Yacoub El Hillo told Poloff August 10 that the first group of new Tanzanian citizens came from the Ulyankulu settlement in Tabora district, where an intentions survey showed the population was readiest to integrate into other communities. El Hillo commented that a successful start to integration would encourage the GOT in its naturalization efforts and that the two processes must continue concurrently. He added that the integration process would require UNCHR and donor engagement through 2011, to reassure the GOT and to ensure that the new Tanzanian citizens would continue receiving support through ongoing UN programs. For those refugees who had specific plans to move elsewhere in Tanzania, El Hillo said UNCHR would work to ensure a quiet transition into the receiving communities.

¶3. (SBU) El Hillo said UNHCR had begun to engage the GOT about refugees who wanted to remain in the settlements or who had no fixed plans about moving elsewhere in Tanzania. Although the GOT has been clear and consistent that all the settlements must be vacated, UNHCR has proposed that the new citizens be allowed to remain near the settlements or at least in the same regions. El Hillo noted that Tabora and Rukwa regions have plenty of unused arable land. UNHCR advised the GOT that allowinC04(gjozxx[tT63H1;?DQS2m3Qy two of the 3,570 individuals in the first batch were rejected for citizenship. He said the Minister of Home Affairs overruled many "non-recommendations" by district officials, instead following the letter of Tanzanian citizenship law by rejecting individuals who had committed serious criminal offenses in Tanzania. El Hillo expressed optimism that this approach, if sustained, would result in the naturalization of all but one to two percent of the applicants. With such small numbers, UNCHR would be able to deal with the rejected applicants as individuals, although their criminal records would make their cases difficult to resolve.

¶5. (SBU) Minister Masha reiterated to CDA August 10 the GOT's intent to fulfill its campaign promise that Tanzania would be free of refugees by 2010. He said the GOT would use the "full range of acceptable means," working with UNHCR and other partners, to achieve that goal. Masha again discussed the refugees with CDA on August 11, stating that he had an understanding with UNHCR to take measures jointly to reduce the 1993 Burundi population as far as possible,

using every legitimate tool available. Masha also made the point that the 1993 Burundi refugees must return home to make way politically within the host region for "the expected flow of more Congolese refugees."

16. (SBU) COMMENT: Completion of the naturalization process by year-end is ambitious but achievable, especially if the first beneficiaries begin to relocate (voluntarily) around the country. Finding a durable solution for the 1993 Burundis remains more difficult, given the GOT's declared intention to close the Mtabila camp with its 35,000 refugees by the end of September. Reducing with a view toward ending the 1993 Burundi refugee presence in Tanzania is seen by the GoT as a required element for the 1972 Burundi naturalization effort.

ANDRE